

A FOUL GHOUL SOUL LOVES GOOD BLOOD FOOD

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[*Author's Note:* In the May 2005, issue of WORD WAYS, Bob McKenty, Alexian Gregory, and I published a version of this article. Ever since, I have continued to dive almost daily for the treasure of additional eye rhymes. You know how it is: We logologists get swept away by a letter-perfect, endlessly undulating concept, and we drown ecstatically in its depths and its shallows.

So, almost five years later, I have more than doubled the number of eye rhymes that appeared in the May 2005 disquisition and have crystallized the concept of what exactly constitutes an eye rhyme. I am grateful to Jeremiah Farrell for encouraging me to share with readers a new and considerably improved taxonomy of this siren-song of a category.]

Long, long ago, in 1833 to be exact, one Thomas Haynes Bayly (1797-1839) wrote the song "Long, Long Ago." Here is the first and best-known, verse:

*Tell me the tales that to me were so dear,
Long, long ago, long ago.
Sing me the songs I delighted to hear,
Long, long ago, long ago.
Now you are come, all my grief is removed.
Let me forget that so long you have roved.
Let me believe that you love as you loved,
Long, long ago, long ago.*

In the fifth through seventh lines of his poem, Bayly created a path-breaking eye rhyme -- *removed*, *roved*, and *loved* -- same last letters, *-oved*, but three different soundings.

Eye rhymes (or sight rhymes) are words that look like rhymes but they don't sound like rhymes. The conceit here is that the viewer of these eye-dentities must focus on the replication of letters that appear in the final syllable or syllables in each of two or more words and ignore the actual sound of those letters and the placement of stress.

Eye rhymes provide dramatic testimony to the phoneme-grapheme chasm that stretches across our glorious, notorious, uproarious, outrageous, courageous, contagious, stupendous, tremendous, end-over-endous English language. The most cheerfully democratic and hospitable language in history, English has welcomed into its vocabulary words ancient and modern, far and near, including their divergent spellings. The result is a delightfully chaotic spelling system that Mario Pei calls "the world's most awesome mess." J. Donald Adams adds, "It is wildly erratic and almost wholly without logic. One needs the eye of a hawk, the ear of a dog, and the memory of an elephant to make headway against its confusions and inconsistencies."

Much of that mess has accumulated from the fact that one set of letters can represent a number of sounds, a phenomenon known as the grapheme-phoneme chasm. That's why George Bernard Shaw was able to spell *fish* as *ghoti* – *gh* as it is sounded in *enough*, *o* as in *women*, and *ti* as in *nation*. That's why a foreign student when asked what word the letters *m-a-n-s-l-a-u-g-h-t-e-r* spelled, responded, "man's laughter." That's why, it is said, *anger* is just one letter away from *danger*.

The pairing of *anger* and *danger* demonstrates the possibility of semantic kinship between eye rhymes. Other specimens include *here-there*, *your-our*, *ponder-wonder*, *height-weight*, *hover-over*, *alliance-dalliance*, *primal-animal*, and *power-mower*.

The intrepid hunter-gatherer logologist experiences an adrenaline rush when such a promising category of words cavorts into view, but capturing double eye rhymes presents little challenge -- *axis-taxis*, *wiped-biped*, *tasting-lasting*, *fetal-petal decal-fecal*, *marble-warble*, *pretty-petty*, *ruin-penguin*, *despite-respite*, *solo-piccolo*, *starchy-monarchy*, *tremble-ensemble*, *choir-reservoir*, *gala-koala*, *static-aquatic*, *rhino-casino*, *rely-completely*, *oral-pastoral*, *wider-consider*, *gamy-infamy*, *flagon-paragon*, *anemic-academic*, *caret-cabaret*, *holy-monopoly*, *gory-history*, *gorilla-tortilla*, *saga-rutabaga*, *bible-terrible*, *deity-spontaneity*, *tiara-marinara*, *opus-octopus*, and (my favorite pairs for their elegance and surprise) *hoist-soloist*, *unit-whodunit*, *cared-infrared*, *stately-philately*, *radios-adios*, *only-wantonly*, and *overage-coverage*.

The quiz at the end of this article adds yet another hundred duos of eye rhymes, further proving that simple pairs are sitting ducks easily flushed out. So we'll move directly to triple plays, quadruple plays, and even more pyrotechnic plays that consist of familiar words.

But before the parade of lists, let's establish the criteria for what constitutes genuine, authentic, certified eye rhymes:

- (1) In each cluster, the eye-rhymed vowel and all succeeding letters must be identical, but, in each example, the consonant that comes right before that vowel must be different. Thus, the likes of *rice-licorice*, *dual-individual*, *limb-climb*, *liar-familiar*, *dial-medial*, *rosy-leprosy*, *nasty-dynasty*, *tiny-destiny*, *nature-signature*, *reign-foreign*, *riot-patriot*, *trophy-dystrophy*, *near-linear*, *clear-nuclear*, *slaughter-laughter*, *jealousy-lousy*, *dragon-paragon*, *promise-compromise*, and *science-conscience-prescience* do not qualify as eye rhymes.
- (2) Proper nouns are excluded because the unorthodox sounding of many names artificially inflates the category, as in *larceny-deny-Allegheny*, *doe-shoe-Chloe*, *vague-ague-Prague*, *save-have-Mojave*, *poise-tortoise-Boise*, *pea-idea-La Brea*, *ache-cache-Apache*, *pace-menace-Liberace*, *pipe-recipe-Filipe*, *file-mobile-Chile*, *rose-lose-Jose*, *wrote-coyote-Quixote*, *sweats-Keats-Yeats*, *bite-elite-Aphrodite-Yosemite*, *began-vegan-Megan*, *fussy-pussy-Debussy*, *halo-buffalo-Palo Alto*, *swath-path-Goliath*, *ride-bona fide-Candide*, *was-has-Madras-Degas*, *bean-Korean-Chilean*, *ally-tally-Wally*, *bone-done-Shoshone*, *dates-pirates-Euphrates*, *aria-malaria-Maria*, and *bead-head-Gilead-Sinead*.

- (3) Barred also are rhymes that depend on absorbed anterior vowels, such as *cat-swat-heat*, *pint-mint-taint*, and *on-won-moon*. Independent anterior vowels, those that do not directly affect the eye-rhymed vowels, are allowed, as in *on-won-neon*, *beat-caveat-whereat*, and *rein-stein-wherein*.
- (4) Controversial pronunciations are permitted if they represent the way speakers actually sound out the letters. For example, the parenthesized end pronunciations of *irony* (*erny*), *orangutan* (*ang*), *panashe* (*ahsh*), and *bona fide* (*feye-dee*) may not be standard, but they are employed by a great many standard speakers, in some cases a majority thereof.
- (5) Contractions are forbidden, such as *front-font-don't* and *led-diced-we'd*.
- (6) On the other hand, words are allowed in which the accent does not fall on the “rhyming” syllables, as *racy-legacy*, *icy-policy*, *vary-binary*, and *acre-massacre*. Such examples are permitted because the convention for eye rhymes is that the viewer pretends to be deaf and focuses only on the identity of the crucial vowel and all succeeding letters.

Now gaze upon the clusters of triple plays and beyond:

TRIPLE EYE RHYMES:

foul-ghoul-soul	good-blood-food
love-move-rove	star-war-beggar
page-postage-mirage	card-ward-standard
sassy-classy-embassy	briar-caviar-familiar
band-wand-errand	debutante-vigilante-andante
tasty-angioplasty-dynasty	aver-shaver-cadaver
poster-roster-foster	fruit-circuit-intuit
pager-lager-dowager	prior-superior-behavior
date-climate-karate	hot-parrot-depot
baked-kayaked-naked	beater-sweater-theater
maid-said-plaid	come-home-epitome
fear-bear-linear	early-dearly-linearly
anted-wanted-panted	china-patina-stamina
wallet-pallet-ballet	bet-closet-ballet
dial-marsupial-facial	neon-nickelodeon-pigeon
hoed-shoed-coed	bite-elite-definite
path-swath-math	father-gather-bather
loner- goner-prisoner	buses-fuses-focuses
copy-dopy-canopy	later-water-alma mater
somber-bomber-beachcomber	longed-gonged-sponged
mature-nature-stature	hive-give-naive
famous-bayous-rendezvous	doused-roused-rendezvoused
writer-liter-arbiter	toes-shoes-does

irate-pirate-emirate	oblige-vestige-prestige
volcano-piano-guano	ago-lumbago-virago
native-combative-negative	wily-lily-happily
touch-pouch-scaramouch	chance-nuance-distance
lion-champion-nation	diner-mariner-pristiner
table-lovable-liable (<i>eye-bull</i>)	dates-pirates-pilates (<i>ah-teez</i>)
wrote-coyote-garrote (<i>aht</i>)	role-hyperbole (<i>uh-lee</i>)-guacamole (<i>oh-lee</i>)
competes-fetes (<i>ates</i>)-diabetes	omen-women-abdomen (<i>uh-min</i>)
ache-mustache-panache (<i>ahsh</i>)	diva-saliva-gingiva
sonata-strata-data (<i>ayt-uh</i>)	word-chord-record (<i>urd</i>)
very-query-fiery (<i>uh-ree</i>)	fade-promenade (<i>ahd</i>)-forbade (<i>ad</i>)
ringed-tinged-winged (<i>ing-id</i>)	most-lost-accost (<i>ahst</i>)
doggy-foggy-loggy (<i>oh-gee</i>)	poise-tortoise-vichyssoise
discrete-fete (<i>ate</i>)-naivete (<i>tay</i>)	zany-many-company (<i>ih-nee</i>)
ally-dally-mentally (<i>ih-ly</i>)	sort-rapport (<i>ore</i>)-effort (<i>ert</i>)
sorry-worry-lorry (<i>aw-ree</i>)	cart-wart-braggart (<i>ert</i>)
gross-loss-albatross (<i>ahss</i>)	anal-canal-banal (<i>uh-nahl</i>)
bus-focus-au jus (<i>oo</i>)	south-youth-mouth (<i>outhe</i> , as a verb)
body-melody-polypody (<i>oh-dee</i>)	shout-ragout-knout (<i>ute</i>)
pays-says-cays (<i>eez</i>)	case-phrase-vase (<i>ahz</i>)
pony-agony (<i>uh-nee</i>)-irony (<i>er-nee</i>)	call-shall-pall-mall (<i>pell-mell</i>)
name-sesame-macrame (<i>ah-may</i>)	tape-agape (<i>ah-pay</i>)-serape (<i>ah-pee</i>)

QUADRUPLE EYE RHYMES:

rose-dose-lose-purpose
 cut-put-debut-gamut
 vein-protein-stein-wherein
 hour-four-your-glamour
 pale-locale-finale-tamale
 pant-restaurant-want-infant
 pal-wherewithal-banal-medical
 deceit-counterfeit- gesundheit-albeit
 seas-yeas-ideas-pancreas
 cases-oases (*ay-seez*)-gases-vases (*ahziz*)
 bias-alias-cafeterias-dementias
 yes-crises-foxes-writes
 pass-lass-bass (*ace*)-cutlass
 cloth-both-doth-betroth (*ohthe*)
 swan-pan-sultan (*in*)-orangutan (*ang*)
 die-menagerie-lingerie (*ay*)-prima facie (*uh*)
 sea-yea (*ay*)-idea-mea (*ay-uh*, as in *mea culpa*)
 comb-bomb-tomb-aplomb (*uhm*)
 bed-served-walked (*t*)-winged (*id*)
 fund-fecund (*ihnd*)-bund (*oohnd*)-dachshund (*oohnt*)
 change-flange-mélange-orange (*indge*)

nice-police-office-licorice (*ish*)
 file-automobile-facile (*uhl*)-chile (*ih-lee*)
 fallow-swallow-allow-marshmallow (*ell-oh*)
 cave-have-suave-grave (*ah-vay*)
 there-were-mere-consigliere (*air-ee*)
 dual (*ool*)-usual-equal-victual (*vit 'l*)
 his-crisis-debris-vis (*eez*, as in *vis a vis*)

QUINTUPLE EYE RHYMES

beat-great-sweat-caveat-whereat
 tier-flier-carrier-dossier-soldier
 aches-caches-mustaches-attaches-spinaches
 pat-swat-what-carat-baccarat (*ah*)
 bone-done-gone-abalone (*oh-nee*)-anemone (*uh-nee*)
 dices-polices-offices-licorices-indices (*ih-ceed*)
 precise-rise-valise (*eece*), expertise (*eez*)-premise (*iss*)
 memos-adios-chaos (*ahs*)-cosmos (*us*)-dos (*ooze* as in *dos and don'ts*)

SEXTUPLE EYE RHYME:

pine-marine-medicine-aborigine-*(ihn-ee)*, linguine (*een-ee*)-sine (*ihn-ih*, as in *sine qua non*)

SEPTUPLE EYE RHYME

ton-on-don-common (*in*)-iron (*ern*)-bon (*oh*, as in *bon mot*), sine qua non (*ohn*)

OCTUPLE EYE RHYME

was-has-gas-spas (*ahz*)-canvas (*iss*)-dogmas (*ihz*)-gravitas (*ahs*)-faux pas (*ah*)

AND THE CHAMPION? (ten soundings, but some with the same introductory consonant):

bough-dough-enough-hiccough-lough (*ock, och*)-through-trough (*off, awth*)-thorough (*ugh*)

Although there are never enough eye rhymes, I've been thorough and I'm through. Hone your skills. Article's done. I'm gone -- except for a quiz about eye rhyme pairs. Examine the words below and think of a second word that is an eye rhyme with the first. The answers in the first cluster are all one syllable, as in *bad-wad*, *worth-north*, and *tease-cease*:

1. damp 2. foot 3. beard 4. wolf 5. owl 6. pint 7. pooch 8. feast 9. earth 10. goof
11. hook 12. own 13. fool 14. gross 15. dog 16. geese 17. cash 18. keen 19. peak 20. front

21. dew 22. patch 23. rouge 24. wharf 25. death 26. goose 27. roll 28. mouse 29. paste
30. care

31. friend 32. bought 33. toad 34. valve 35. soup 36. raft 37. harm 38. taunt 39. full 40.
cow

Now, and with a greater degree of difficulty, the answers are all polysyllabic, as in
grovel-shovel, oval-approval, and final-medicinal:

41. strict 42. sieve 43. pain 44. cue 45. these 46. bond 47. need 48. wait 49. courage 50.
much

51. joke 52. cable 53. hope 54. never 55. lousy 56. bee 57. robe 57. niche 58. loin 59.
prayer 60. evil

61. simply 62. lemon 63. dozen 64. denial 65. discount 66. jury 67. marry 68. ready 69.
bully 70. lowly

71. finger 72. into 73. picked 74. folder 75. model 76. latent 77. valor 78. laughter 79.
binder 80. mother

81. wallop 82. preface 83. lumber 84. even 85. duet 86. ether 87. budding 88. stringy 89.
saddle 90. battle

91. feather 92. tomato 93. aria 94. gander 95. hunger 96. scrounger 97. pollen 98. garden
99. kilo 100. amber

A POEM

MARTIN GARDNER
Norman, Oklahoma

This is an excerpt from Gardner's 1969 book *Never Make Fun Of A Turtle, My Son*
(Simon and Schuster, illustrated by John Alcorn).

Politeness

Always be polite, dear Rose,
No matter where you go,
And say "Excuse me" if you step
On Mrs. Tiger's toe.

It's awfully rude to make a face
At Dr. Alligator,
Especially when you meet inside
A crowded elevator.

In case a bee lands on your nose,
Don't greet him with a swat.
Say, "Mr. Buzz, please try to find
Another parking spot."

It pays to be polite, my girl,
In everything you do.
You'll find when you're polite to friends,
They'll be polite to you.